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1962/10/08

(315)

October 8, 1962

SUMMARY MEMORANDUM OF DISCUSSIONS WITH CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS ON THE DONOVAN PROJECT,

1. Each of the following was given a briefing of the background of the transaction from the time the Cuban Prisoner Family Committee negotiated for the release of 50 prisoners who were ill and Castro established a \$61 million price for all prisoners, down to the current status of the negotiation as outlined in draft memorandum of 6 October 1962.

2. Senators Mansfield, Dirksen, Kuchel and Saltonstall agreed without reservation and with full knowledge of the extent of the covert U.S. Government support as outlined in the memorandum.

3. Chairmen Cannon and Vinson also agreed. Cannon indicated he would expect CIA funds used in the amounts indicated to be replaced from other reserves, such as the "Presidential Reserve Fund." Chairman Vinson in approving requested that Congressman Les Arends be informed and this will be done immediately.

4. Senator Russell, when briefed on Thursday, indicated no positive objection but wished to be informed as negotiations progress and expressed particular concern over the use of government appropriated funds, indicating a preference for the use of surplus funds which would not represent an "out of pocket loss" to the U.S. Government. Parenthetically Senator Russell was unavailable Saturday afternoon and Sunday and will be contacted today if possible.

5. Speaker McCormack has not been available. An attempt will be made to contact him on October the 8th.

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6. Congressman Charles Halleck voiced strong opposition, indicating a preference to "take the prisoners by force." However when asked if this meant he advocated military invasion of Cuba, he replied that he did not. Halleck stated that he would not disclose DCI discussion with him nor would he speak out against the transaction if it was consummated.

7. Senator Hickenlooper indicated dissatisfaction on the grounds that the release of the prisoners for a substantial consideration, even though in the form of drugs and food, would create adverse reaction with allies and neutral countries we have asked not to trade with Cuba. He believed that for the long term, firmness in our policy would be better and that this trade would be unacceptable to a large segment of the American people. Hickenlooper reserved the right to speak out against the transaction but added he would respect all confidences.

John A. McCone
Director

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